

GOVERNOR BARBOUR UNVEILS NEW TOURISM MESSAGE Welcome signs feature 'Birthplace of America's Music'

Jackson, Mississippi – In recognition of tourism's \$6 billion impact on the Mississippi economy, Governor Haley Barbour today unveiled new highway welcome signs that highlight the state's emerging identity as the "Birthplace of America's Music."

"It has been known for many years that Mississippi's musical heritage makes us the real 'Birthplace of America's Music' – from the blues, to country, to rock 'n roll, to gospel," Governor Barbour said. "These new welcome signs and the slogan are really designed to recognize and honor all of the talented men and women whose incredible array of entertainment skills put Mississippi on the world's music map."

During a press conference at Jackson-Evers International Airport, Governor Barbour unveiled a replica of the new signs and proclaimed this week as Mississippi Tourism Week, coinciding with National Travel and Tourism Week the tourism industry's commemorative event that runs through May 17. The Governor chose Mississippi's largest airport for the event because it is one of the state's preeminent gateways; one of the first new welcome signs was placed on Airport Road.

"Travel and tourism play a key role in the economy," said Governor Haley Barbour. "Our state relies on travel for tax revenue and jobs and the benefits these bring to our economy. With this week's activities we hope to raise awareness and showcase why travel matters."

"I dare say, no state has a greater claim on the slogan 'Birthplace of America's Music' than Mississippi, and no state's governor could be as proud as I am today with this recognition," Governor Barbour said.

So far, signs have also been placed at the Mississippi Welcome Center in Vicksburg; on I-55 in DeSoto County; I-20 in Warren, Lauderdale, and Jackson counties; I-10 in Jackson and Hancock counties; Highway 78 and Highway 61 in DeSoto county; the newest will go up on I-55 in Pike County this week.

Governor Barbour credited teamwork among the Mississippi Development Authority's Division of Tourism, the Legislature, and the Mississippi Department of Transportation in the new sign project. He praised Sen. Lydia Chassaniol, chair of the Senate Tourism Committee; Rep. Diane Peranich, chair of the House Tourism Committee; Senator Tom King, chair of Senate Transportation; Rep.

Warner McBride, chair of House Transportation; and Dick Hall,
Central District Transportation Commissioner

Overall, the Mississippi Tourism Week event emphasizes the economic benefits travel and tourism brings to local workers and communities and demonstrates the importance of travel. This event is part of a larger effort led by the U.S. Travel Association with rallies in dozens of cities nationwide.

Mississippi tourism facts:

- Tourism in Mississippi is a \$6 billion industry
- 85,000 direct jobs, nearly 31,000 indirect jobs – total of 116,000 jobs
- Tourism ranks 6th in total statewide employment
- Total payroll - \$2.56 billion
- Total visitors – 20.2 million

#